PART THREE

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FACTS ABOUT LONDON

FIGURES THAT CONVEY AN IDEA OF THE GREATNESS OF THE CITY.

Not the State Statements of Guide-books, but Information Showing the Metropolis as It Is.

MARRIAGES, BIRTHS, DEATHS

THE FORMER NUMBER ABOUT FORTY THOUSAND ANNUALLY,

And the Births Reach a Total of 130,000—Other Figures Relating to Features of the City's Life.

Correspondence of the Indianapolis Journal.

LONDON, Jan. 22.—All Americans are interested in London, those who have never visited it, but who hold, as the fondest hope of life, next to going to heaven, the expectation of visiting it, equally with those who have been here, and who are determined to come again and again, every good chance they get. Consequently there are none who will not be glad to have their present knowledge of this big city reinforced by a few new facts, especially if these facts are really new, relating to London as it is at the present hour, rather than the stale commonplaces of the guide-book. Matrimony is always a fascinating topic, whether treated with reference to a single couple or to multitudes of them. Every year in London eighty thousand persons take each other for better or worse, and from the fact that there are relatively so few divorces, one might conclude that nearly all these forty thousand annual splicings were for the better. But the Divorce Court is no safe criterion upon this point. You can get married for a few shillings, but to get the knot untied takes a small fortune, and is, therefore, a luxury possible only for the well-to-do. Largely, too, the privilege of getting unspliced is in the hands of the men. Let a man refrain from punching or frightening or openly humiliating his wife, and he may be as flagrantly untrue to her as he pleases. But what is safe sauce for the gander would spoil the goose, for English law on this subject, besides being for the rich as against the poor, is also for the man as against the woman.

Three-fourths of the London weddings take place in houses of worship belonging to the Established Church and are celebrated by clergymen of that church. The remainder occur mostly in the chapels of nonconformity and dissent. Outside of the ministry the only functionary in England who can tie the knot-matrimonial is the district registrar. But it costs quite a sum, and involves a special license to get spliced in a private way before an official of this kind, and this, of course, is one reason why all but a small proportion of those launching out into the uncertain sea of wedlock do so from some religious altar. There is, however, another reason, viz., the ingrained conviction of the English, due to immemorial usage, that to be married elsewhere than in some house of worship is to cheat the Supreme Being and give a dangerous advantage to the devil. And it is owing to a similar superstition that the lion's share of English weddings are celebrated in the churches rather than in chapels. Many even of those who statedly worship in chapels would think a state church the more suitable place for a matrimonial service, and the state helps this semi-superstitious notion by making chapel weddings difficult and church weddings easy. At a chapel wedding, for instance, the registrar must have a part, as well as the minister, whereas at church weddings the clergyman is legally authorized to tie the knot by himself.

THE BIRTH RATE.

Every year two thousand persons are married in London who can neither read nor write. This is somewhat strange, considering that for thirty years a compulsory educational law has been in force. But up to a recent date the trouble with this law was that it compelled people to send their children to school and to pay for sending them. Only a few pence per child were exacted, but in thousands of London families pence were as prohibitive as pounds would have been, and the magistrates for a long time brought the law to bear in such cases very leniently. Elementary education is now free and the percentage of adult illiterates is likely to drop. But it will always be greater in a vast metropolis like London than in smaller places. Just as a big city is the safest place for criminals to hide in, so it naturally affords the best cover for minor offenders against the law. To-day, in spite of compulsory education, of free dinners to necessitous little ones and of free tuition, there are in London more than a hundred thousand children of school age not entered in any school register. The school census is nearly a million, the attendance not more than 800,000.

Upon the bosom of this great city's life there are laid yearly 130,000 tiny mites of experimental humanity. There are always more boys born than girls, and those who know the prevalence of illegitimacy and other evils pathetically observe that out of these 130,000 new arrivals at least 5,000 are neither wanted nor welcomed. It is, perhaps, just as well that within two years of their coming to town, 30,000 of these city additions to the biggest city on earth go to a better place than London, harrowing though it is to think how many of them die from overlaying and neglect. Forty thousand people leave London annually for residence elsewhere and 86,000 go from it to their long home. Yet the births and the large influx from the country so overwhelmingly swamp this drain that its population increases by about 40,000 a year, and from having been less than a million a century ago is now 6,600,000.

The birth rate in London last year was the lowest ever recorded and the actual number of births was less than in any year since 1890. The Daily News says that, compared to the prolific times of the sixties and seventies, there is a very remarkable decline in London and that the same downward tendency prevails throughout the whole of England. Upon this subject, which is a delicate but most vital one, the Dean of Ripon says, in a letter to the London Times, that the causes of depopulation which are exciting so much dismay in France are not peculiar to that country. All Europe, except Russia, is going in the same direction, and England is leading the way. In the year 1875 there were born in the United Kingdom thirty-five children for every 1,000 of the people. In the year 1900 only twenty-nine. This, says the dean, means a loss of 249,000 children a year and implies a much more rapid decline of the birth rate than in France.

THE MORTALITY TABLE.

From the cradle to the grave it isn't a very far cry to the grave, and it is comforting to know that if there is a decline in London's birth rate, so is there, also, in its death rate. Despite lung-choking fogs, which are responsible, it is said, for the demise of 3,000 Londoners every winter, and notwithstanding the smallpox scare and other incipient epidemics, London has still a mortality table which might be envied by the other large cities of this country, and which, also, makes a better showing than those of Paris or New York. With pardonable exultation one of the London dailies asks, why do Londoners go far away in search of health, when those who live in the suburbs of this city enjoy conditions superior to many of the boasted health resorts? Any one with centenarian ambitions should settle, says this writer, in the outer ring of Greater London, and even the inner ring, he says, is as healthy, according to statistics, as most of the watering places.

But this superiority of London as a health center is held by some to be a big thing on paper only. Figures will lie, they remind us. The low death rate is deceptive, for it results, not from the healthfulness of London, but from the fact that there is a continuous tide of delicate natives ebbing out of the metropolis and a greater tide of the best blood of the country always flowing into it. Indeed, say they, a very appropriate legend for every signpost pointing to London, would be, "Healthy men and women taken in and done for." Scientific medical men have declared, after long investigation, that dwellers within the four-mile circle might possibly get a breath of ozone once a quarter, but that in all probability those dwelling in the Strand, Fleet street, Holborn and Cheapside haven't had a whiff of that kind of thing in the last eighty or one hundred years. After all, though, even the teeming centers of London can't be really unhealthy to those who live sober and regular lives. Else, how comes it that there are so many aged people passing a comfortable existence in the London workhouses? At Camberwell, out of 916 inmates, there are 133 whose boast it is that, being over eighty, they have lived under five English sovereigns, and there are 100 who can make this boast at the Bethnal Green Workhouse, which houses paupers from the slum district of the East End.

The coroners of London hold annually about 8,000 inquests. Deaths from violence last year numbered 3,671. There were only fifty-eight homicides, the verdicts of murder being thirty-two, and of manslaughter twenty-six. Suicides were discovered to the number of 451. Very common is it in London for despairing lovers to die together. Doubtless, if the river did not carry out to sea so many bodies of female unfortunates who take the watery route into oblivion, the total of reported suicides would be much larger. In this connection, how sad to know that every night there are 3,000 women in London whose only place to lay their heads is in some shelter provided by charity. There were 371 deaths last year from street accidents, and annually the number injured by the street traffic of London approaches closely to ten thousand.

PASSENGER TRANSPORTATION.

There are over 2,500 'buses running every day in London. Ten years ago there were only 1,800. The average distance covered daily is sixty-four miles; the average net earnings per 'bus, $12.50. The average conductor gets $1.25 a day and the driver $1.50. Every conductor and driver pays $1.25 annually for a license. There is one driver still at work in London at eighty-five years of age. He boasts the distinction of having driven the last mail coach that came into London from the West. He has driven a 'bus through the streets of London sixty-five years and in that time has, of course, covered a length of road which would exceed many times the circumference of the earth.

Mr. Benn, chairman of the highways committee of the London County Council, has just given some instructive figures regarding the number of passengers carried by various means throughout London in the course of a year. By railways the estimate is 400,000,000, by omnibus 500,000,000, tramways 300,000,000, hackney carriages 70,000,000, steamboats 3,500,000, making the enormous total of 1,125,000,000. Thirty-eight omnibus routes converge at Charing Cross and about 700 'buses pass there every hour, carrying 9,000 passengers per hour. As an omnibus center, Piccadilly Circus ranks next to Charing Cross, with 650 'buses for the hour and 8,500 passengers. Along the Strand 445 'buses pass, carrying 6,000 passengers in the hour and at Hyde Park Corner the rate per hour is 390 buses and 5,000 passengers.

It is, perhaps, not generally known that last summer a new street in London was named Joubert, in honor of the first commander of the Boer armies. It was the Borough of Battersea which finally fixed upon this name, but some credit is also due to the London County Council, which has full power over all street names, both old and new, and which has generously included Joubert amongst the six names it allowed the Battersea councilmen to select from. In its use of the power given it by Parliament to change offensive street names for those more pleasing to the eye and ear, the L. C. C. has done a delicate and difficult work in a very credible way. There used to be a Breakneck alley in the Minories, a Brimstone court and a Crackbrain court near the Tower and a Jacknapes row in Cheapside, but these have disappeared. Gone also are Breeches-yard, Kidney-stairs and Pie-corner. But one wonders that this last name has gone for there is still a Pudding lane, and both these names are historic, for it was in Pudding lane that the great fire of London started and in Pie-corner that it ended. Other queer survivals, probably doomed, however, amongst the 23,000 name places of London, are Halfpenny alley in Bermondsey, Cutthroat lane in Camberwell and Labor-in-Vain street in Shadwell.

POLICE FORCE AND WATER SUPPLY.

One cannot think long about the London streets without calling to mind their chief ornament and ever present guardian, the London policeman. The metropolis is better policed than any of the provincial towns and cities. For the city and metropolitan area the rate is one policeman for every 400 persons, whereas in provincial municipalities there is only one for every 700. In the city of London proper, which is so forsaken after business hours, police guardianship is still better, viz., one policeman for every thirty-seven persons who sleep in the city at night and one for every 350 who work in it by day. Toward the maintenance of the London police the government contributes $3,500,000 annually, besides the $750,000 it puts annually into their pension fund. London's bobbies aggregate 15,000 and cost in all $12,000,000 a year.

The water supply of this great city has attained gigantic proportions. There are 1,822 miles of streets containing pipes constantly charged. Two-thirds of the fluid passing through them comes from the Thames, the remainder being from the river Lea and from springs and wells. Over the filter-beds there passed during last July a daily volume of 240,000,000 gallons, the daily consumption per head for all purposes being about thirty-nine gallons. Londoners generally try to persuade themselves that the water they are asked to drink isn't very good. This affords them an excuse for taking something stronger. But the London water is scarcely so bad as it was made out to be by an aggrieved householder who wrote to the company one sultry day last July to thank them for the gallon he had coaxed out of his tap that day. The fish it contained they had for tea, he said, the microbes and bacteria they sold to a medical society, and after they had skimmed the water off the children made pies with the sand!

The London ratepayers this last Christmas had to provide for over 4,300 more paupers than the Christmas before. At the close of the year 107,539 persons in this city were in receipt of poor law relief, of whom 63,130 were in workhouses, the rest getting their pauper's pittance outside. This is the highest total registered at any Christmas since 1872. Besides its maintenance of these, the city last year gave to charity, in support of 722 different institutions, the princely sum of $32,500,000.

HENRY TUCKLEY.

PRINCE HENRY OF PRUSSIA.

The halftone picture here presented was made from the latest photograph of Emperor William's brother, who will arrive at New York on Feb. 22.

OUTDOOR NAPS FOR BABIES.

The Little Dears Need Ozone Just as Well as the Rest of Us Do.

Does your baby take his nap in the open air? If not, then he is missing the best tonic that nature can give him. At least that is the popular theory at present, and it is being put into practice by leading physicians.

It is the usual practice to "coddle" babies in winter time by keeping them in warm rooms, safely protected from any whiff of outdoor air. But now we are told that this is all wrong, that the baby should be well wrapped and put in his carriage out of doors for his nap. And some remarkably fine specimens of babyhood are shown in evidence of the successful working of this plan.

The physicians explain the new departure upon the ground that the baby's blood needs cleansing by means of fresh ozone, just as his face or his hands need cleansing with water; that in no other way can the baby have its lungs filled with pure, fresh air, which will purify the blood, so well as to allow it to sleep out of doors. The child should be well wrapped, but not so overwrapped as to cause it to perspire. With this one condition met there is no danger whatever so long as the thermometer registers not less than 20 degrees above zero.

Babies that have been for some time subjected to this treatment find it difficult to sleep well in the house, and one physician whose own baby has daily outdoor naps says that the child is wonderfully healthy and strong. He prescribes it for babies that are ailing and finds it a more effective cure than medicine in many cases, adding: "There's nothing like pure, fresh air, and babies need it even more than grown people."

How Times Have Changed.

Detroit Free Press.

Poor Mr. Bryan finds things very different in these days. The other day they gave him a banquet in Boston at which there were forty places that were to have been occupied by old supporters of his, but weren't. Among others, Joshua Quincy had an engagement in Canada. Even George Fred Williams abandoned the fallen idol. When George Fred plays the part of Brutus it is time that the Nebraskan "in his mantle muffling up his face" should hustle off the stage. But possibly there is more money still in oratory than in editorializing.

THE LITERARY OUTLOOK

MARCONI, THE WIRELESS TELEGRAPHY MAN, WILL WRITE A BOOK.

Opening of the Spring Book Season Not Lively—Dr. Doyle's Latest Contribution to War Literature.

Correspondence of the Indianapolis Journal.

NEW YORK, Jan. 30.—As a scientist Marconi is pretty generally known. His intimate friends have been charmed by his power as a musician. He is an accomplished linguist, an enthusiastic athlete and a modest recipient of various honors as a practical man of affairs. He draws a salary, half a crown a day, as a member of the Italian navy, and his King has recently made him a knight. All these things are known, more or less, of this young man of twenty-seven years, but I venture to assert that very few persons are aware of the fact that Marconi has almost completed a book. Marconi as an author is a new role, but if he carries it out as successfully as he has carried out all the other labors which he has attempted the sale of his book will run into tens of thousands. The volume in question, for it will be made into a volume this spring, is Marconi's own story of his part in the development of the great scientific principles which have made it possible for him to link the continents of the earth together with nothing less than etheric waves. For the past two years Marconi has been devoting some of his spare time to the labor of collecting his material, and it is safe to say that his book will be both clear and authoritative. He has inspired the reading public with confidence because he has made it a rule never to say anything which was not true and never to affirm he could do anything which he had not actually accomplished. Such a book as he will have written during the progress of his great work cannot fail to be of importance or to have a cordial reception both from the scientist and the man of the street.

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Henry Wallace Phillips is gaining an enviable reputation as a writer of short, humorous Western fiction. He has indeed written two or three long stories, the last of which will be published serially this spring, but it is as a short story teller that he will be best known for some time to come. He has a way of putting into an ordinary magazine story of say 5,000 to 8,000 words enough plot and action for a novel, and, in just that manner, it seems to me, does he accomplish his success. The grave trouble with many of the present day novelists is that they make a volume out of just about sufficient material for a short story. Many times friends of Mr. Phillips have implored him to save some of his short story plots for novels of Western life, but he says he has so many plots that he can afford to be prodigal. In marked contrast to this practice, as I have said, is the method of many novelists. One of the recent books, "Severance," by Thomas Cobb, while being a delightful story in a certain sense, might have been vastly improved by a liberal use of the blue pencil in the editing.

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In her last published volume, a book of fairy stories, "Carmen Sylva," Elizabeth, Queen of Roumania, tells of her literary work as a girl and of her search for a nom de plume when she decided to publish some of her writings. When she was nine years old she composed verses, and at eleven attempted a novel. When only fourteen she wrote a drama, as she called it at the time, and acted it out with a company of dolls. As early as fifteen she began the daily study of newspapers and three years later she had the reputation of being the best-educated princess in Europe. At that time she was called the "Princess of the Wild Rose," and when Prince Charles of Roumania was placed on the throne she became his Princess Beautiful. The Queen began serious writing in 1878, but not until she was thirty-five years old did she consent to having anything printed, and then only because she wished to devote the proceeds of her writings to charity. To a friend she confided her desire for a poetic pen name and together they chose "Carmen Sylva," because their Latin significance was "forest" and "poem" or "song." When the name was suggested the Queen clapped her hands together. "I have my name. In German I am "Waldgesang (the song of the woods); in Latin I am carmen sylvae. Sylvae doesn't sound like a real name, so we must take a liberty and call it "Sylva."

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Besides writing a comprehensive history of the Boer war up to the end of the first year and then revising this volume so as to include most of the second year, Conan Doyle is about to display his patriotism to the English cause by publishing a further contribution to the historical literature of this period. The volume, "The War, Its Cause and Effect," is 150 pages in length and is issued under probably as peculiar conditions as ever book was issued. At the request of the author, the publishers agree to distribute the book in this country at the mere cost of printing. Mr. Doyle's reasons for thus carrying on his Boer war writings are best explained by his preface, from which we quote:

"For some reason, which may be either arrogance or apathy, the British are very slow to state their case to the world. At present the reason for our action and the methods which we have used are set forth in many Blue books, tracts and leaflets, but have never, so far as I know, been collected in one small volume. In view of the persistent slanders to which our politicians and our soldiers have been equally exposed, it becomes a duty which we owe to our national honor to lay the facts before the world. I wish some one more competent, and with some official authority, had undertaken the task which I have tried to do as best I might from an independent standpoint.

"There was never a war in history in which the right was absolutely on one side, or in which no incidents of the campaign were open to criticism. I do not pretend that it was so here. But I do not think that any unprejudiced man can read the facts without acknowledging that the British government has done its best to avoid war, and the British army to wage it with humanity."

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Mr. Clarence Urmy, the young Californian whose verses are attracting attention for their perfect rhyme, does not believe himself a poet—simply a writer of verses—but this does not detract from the value of his work as viewed by others. By profession Mr. Urmy is a musician, being the choirmaster and organist of an Episcopal church in San Jose. His first volume of verses made its appearance in 1884, and was privately issued under the title, "A Rosary of Rhyme." About four years ago "A Vintage of Verse" was brought out, and now Mr. Urmy is at work on another volume which is to have for its title "Rhymes from the Red Woods." This will be made up from the most successful verses, lyrics and pen pictures of California scenery. Many of these have been set to music by Reginald De Koven and Clara Kathleen Rogers. Mr. Urmy also contributes occasionally to the literary publications, and all that he writes bears the mark of infinite care in its preparation.

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Little advance has been made thus far toward the coming spring books. Several have been announced, but, save for a few exceptions, these are for publication beginning in the latter part of March. Among the most important so far announced are Henry Harland's "The Lady Paramount," Allen French's "The Colonials," Conan Doyle's "Houne of the Baskervilles," Max O'Rell's "Studies in Cheerfulness" and Marconi's book on wireless telegraphy.

HERBERT BREWSTER.

A POINT OF MORALS.

Deleterious Influence of Swash-Buckler Stories and Plays.

Richard Duffy, in Ainslee's Magazine.

Long ago William Dean Howells protested against the immorality of the pseudo historical novel. Yet this novel becomes more and more popular as book seasons pass. It is read by the best people, by most of the people and largely by young people. School girls and boys that would faint at the sight of a bloody handkerchief revel in pages of gore. Respectable maiden ladies, who feel it a duty to interfere whenever they see two boys at fisticuffs in the street, stay awake into the small hours engrossed in the latest romantic novel, a story of adventure, for which read rapine; of gallant deeds, for which read murder and assault; and of young love, for which read lust. Every play made from a swashbuckler novel must have from three to a dozen sword fights and one supreme scene in which the bad man attempts to assault the good girl. Now, these sword fights are so pernicious an incentive to headiness and combat among the strong and valorous youth of our land that they should be discouraged emphatically. We have football and boxing gloves to keep alive in our young men the spirit of manliness and the skill that is necessary to prove it. And certainly the clumsy, attempted assault scenes of the swashbuckler drama are as immoral as anything in "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray." From the point of view of good taste they are unmentionable. But the worst sin of all these plays is their fat stupidity. All else may be condoned, but their stupidity is unpardonable. Actors are stupefied by playing in such plays, managers by reading them, critics by considering them, and the public by seeing them. The swashbuckler story and play is a disease, and it must go through its course. Ah, what a hereafter for the men that make them and get rich on them! Readers and audiences have it here. Theirs must be to come.

A Literary "Find."

New York Evening Post.

A most remarkable literary find has just been made in Tubingen by Professor Seybold. While engaged in the preparation of the catalogue of the Arabian manuscripts in the library of the university in that city he discovered in a manuscript, which had hitherto escaped attention, what would appear to be the oldest of all manuscripts of the "Thousand and One Nights" in existence. An examination of this manuscript shows that it is at least five hundred years old, and, what is more amazing still, it contains, among other things, a tale not contained in any of the other manuscripts in this collection. Professor Seybold proposes to make a German translation of this unpublished tale, which will, when completed, be published with notes based on the philological and other studies with which he is at present engaged. All lovers of these most delightful of tales will hail with delight the addition of another to the existing number. In one respect this remarkable discovery recalls the great feat of Niebuhr, the great German historian, who discovered in the library at Bologna the manuscript of Gaius, which, being the only one so far found, revolutionized the study of Roman law in his time.

Gilbert Parker's "Rosalie."

Philadelphia Times.

Gilbert Parker, now in this country, was as near Philadelphia as Reading, Pa., a few weeks ago, following hard upon his return from England, where he had been since the publication of his latest novel, "The Right of Way." Reading is out of the beaten track of the successful man of letters, and we are not accustomed to associate romance with the busy little city of the coal-mining districts of this State. But it transpires that the original of the charming Rosalie in "The Right of Way" belongs in Reading, in the person of Miss Ethel Roland, whom Mr. Parker met on the occasion of the 1900 production of "The Passion Play" at Oberammergau. He is quoted as saying that Miss Roland then impressed him as possessing the very qualities of mind and matter embodied in the Rosalie who is the object of poor Charlie Steele's care and affection in what is proving, from all appearances, the Canadian novelist's most successful contribution to fiction.

The Irascible Henley.

Collier's Weekly.

The row raised by W. E. Henley's attack on Stevenson continues to disturb literary circles. It is a little surprising that this should be so, for Henley grows more "strenuous" as he grows older, and his cock-a-whoop line, "Beneath the bludgeonings of fate, my head is bloody but unbowed," very well expressed the creed of the mildest period of his youth. His capacity for hatred is unlimited, and above all others he hates his friends. This story is told of him: A few years ago a "testimonial" was arranged for him, and among the subscribers was Rudyard Kipling, whose talents Henley discovered long before they were apparent to other critics. Kipling sent in a check with the word "only" after the amount. That is a way a good many Englishmen write checks. But Henley was stirred to a passion of rage by what he regarded as an insinuation against his honor, and he threw the check into the fire.

A Little Known Poet.

New York Times Literary Review.

In spite of his long, full life, it is quite likely that Aubrey de Vere, who died the other day, will now be read, since he is dead, more generally and by people who never heard of him while living. He was, perhaps, the last survivor of those eager and romantic formative influences of the second quarter of the last century which were at length to find full and beautiful expression in what is known as the Tennysonian age. He was not only a poet, but the friend and censor of poets; an Irishman and a Catholic, his nature was warm and molded for the friendship of genius, as his recent autobiographical volume of "Recollections" amply shows. Landor, Carlyle, Browning, Newman and Manning were men who knew how to value his friendship, and when we take into consideration the hetrogeneous temperaments of these men, the faculty for making and holding friends seems, in Aubrey de Vere, to have amounted to genius.

Yells That Came High.

New York Evening Post.

A popular writer of animal stories has a wife who is distinctly the business head of the household. A representative of one of the magazines was sent to get an article from the author, who, in the course of an interview, imitated the yelp of the coyote. The magazine man promptly suggested that the yelp should be arranged in a bar of music and introduced in the article. "Yes," said the writer's wife, "but I think my husband should be paid extra for it." "Well," said the interviewer, "I am authorized to pay anything within reason. What do you think would be fair?" The lady thought for a moment, and then said: "About $20 a yelp—I think." As the coyote's yelp cannot be compared with that of the publishers when this suggestion was repeated to them, the article was dropped.

ISTHMUS OF PANAMA

A REGION WHICH HAS SUDDENLY ASSUMED A NEW INTEREST.

Colon, the Atlantic Terminus of Canal Line, a Neglected, Deserted and Unpleasing Place.

A WORLD'S NATURAL HIGHWAY

PANAMA A TRAVEL CENTER WITH QUITE A COSMOPOLITAN AIR.

Americans Whose Business Compels Them to Live on Isthmus Regard Themselves as Exiles.

Correspondence of the Indianapolis Journal.

PANAMA, Jan. 20.—It was rather a pity that while the Titanic forces were at work in the building of the North and South American continents that they did not wrench them clear apart instead of leaving the narrow isthmus of land which looks so small upon the map, but which is sufficient to change the channels of trade of the whole world.

It is but thirty-five miles between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans on the narrow land across the Isthmus of Panama. The attempt to unite the waters of the two oceans nearly wrecked a great European nation financially and has been the subject of discussion in the parliaments of the world for half a century. Across this isthmus is the great highway of the world's commerce. Even the population has no nationality, for it is polygot. No one stays there who can get away. It is the abiding place of such human drift as lodges there and the last resting place of the many who have come from afar off full of health, strength and hope to fight an unequal duel with nature in her most vicious and insanitary mood. For a century the control of the Isthmus of Panama has been the subject of ultimatum threats and treaties, not for its favor, but for the danger to the world powers in the exclusive possession of this highway by one of their number. It must also be a property in common over which any one nation cannot hold a right to the exclusion of others. By common consent of all it is ruled by the United States of Colombia. She acts as caretaker of the bridge. Her pay is the security of her possession and the right to tax the native, for all foreigners pass without toll.

Like the ribs of a fan come the steamship lines across the Atlantic to Colon on the north side of the isthmus. The trade they bring crosses to the Pacific, then divides and flows north and south, following closely the coast line. Some reaches as far north as San Francisco, more as far south as Valparaiso. In return comes back the bullion, hard woods, coffee, rubber and other native products, and they in turn go out on the ribs of the fan to all parts of the world.

COLON LOOKS ATTRACTIVE.

The long roll and rough water of the Caribbean sea makes Colon always a pleasant sight to the weary voyager. The land promises a safe footing, the hills are green, the white-roofed, wide-galleried houses suggest peace, stability, perhaps comfort, but most assuredly a welcome change, for the sea sometimes becomes monotonous and uninteresting, and does not hesitate to indulge in moods, a privilege only accorded to things and persons already great beyond recall. The people turn out upon the dock to greet the incoming vessel. Many negroes, a few natives, a sprinkling of white men. There is always an amusing aggressiveness about a white man who lives in Colon. His manner seems to say: "Yes, I live here, and I like it. Wouldn't leave here for the world. It's a fine place." That is only his company manner, however, for when you know him well and the time is favorable for confidences he will talk with large oaths about the place, and weep over his exile from all that makes life worth living. He will tell you of his best friend who "went with the fever" last year and the other friend who "went" the year before. He will speak with reminiscent fondness of the trip he made to the States two years before, and his face will brighten up with hope as he speaks of the trip he will make next year if he does not "go with the fever" before that time. Why does he stay? A shrug of the shoulders. "Quien sabe? Somebody has to stay, I suppose. Might as well be me. Wouldn't be worth a cuss anywhere else, anyhow."

Colon is a miserable place. At one time it was quite presentable, but a fire destroyed its one business block, and as the Panama Railroad Company did not need it in its business it has not been rebuilt. The town is not drained, has no sanitary provision, no drinking water fit to use, and a traveler cannot get a decent meal for any price. It is not to be had.

From Colon starts the railroad, which crosses the isthmus to the town of Panama on the Pacific side. All the business of Colon is railroad business. Any claims it may have to decency, good government or civilization are due to the rather effective and modern American management of the Panama Railroad. There is quite a colony of railroad employes, nearly all Americans, and the traveler who is fortunate enough to penetrate the confines of this colony will find them a hospitable lot of people who make the best of a bad situation and really succeed in living in comparative comfort. A few of them have successfully fought off the fever for many years, others have it more or less nearly all the time and others can only stand it by a yearly trip to the United States to get rid of the malaria, which seems to impregnate everybody and everything. Many have fallen in this wearisome and unequal battle, and Monkey Hill, the town cemetery, is seldom many days without an addition to its silent colony, the intervals between the coming depending upon the seasons.

ITS GLORY IN THE PAST.

The real story of Colon lies in the past, first when the railroad was building forty years ago, and then again in the eighties, when the Frenchmen were spending the money on the canal company with prodigal hand. To-day the town of Colon is dirty and uninteresting. The stranger expresses his disgust. The old resident admits he may be right, but hastens to add, "Ah, but you should have been here in '86. Then it was a fine place. Money flowed like water, men died like flies," etc. Colon lives in the past, with its few old-timers. The newcomers live in the hopes of the future. Outside of the railroad interests it is now merely the point of departure for Panama.